

# What goes on in the toilet stays there...

**DICK LUMSDEN** takes part in a DIY health test which sounds a lot worse than it actually is

**T**here's very little dignity in a toilet. Things go on in there that you wouldn't want anyone else to see – or hear. I wouldn't normally offend you with news of my own toilet activities, but as I have just gone through one of the most bizarre experiences of my life, I feel the urge to share.

But let's go back a bit first. Regular readers of this column may know that I have recently turned 60, entering my seventh decade with a skip and a jump and determined to behave as if I was still in my 30s.

Running through a quick mental checklist I don't feel I'm in that bad shape. My knees are a bit dodgy, my back creaks like a rusty old door, there's a touch of the Mr Magoo about my eyesight and Mrs Lumsden is convinced I'm going deaf – either that or I choose not to hear her frequent commands.

But apart from that, I'm still going strong, still fighting for a seat on the trains to London and back and enjoying life to the full – whether it's in a pint glass or a wine glass.

It turns out that being 60 isn't that much different from being 50 – or even 40 for that matter. Except there are a couple of unexpected benefits.

For instance, I've just renewed my season ticket at Portman Road and discovered that next season I'll be a "senior citizen" and my ticket is almost 30% cheaper.

Doctor's prescriptions are now free, as are eye tests. And I can buy a senior rail card and get a third off travel – except none of the trains that qualify are any good for me... but still.

And so back to the toilet.

About two weeks after my 60th birthday I received a letter from the

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NHS inviting me to take part in the national bowel cancer screening programme.

Everyone between the ages of 60 and 74 are invited to take part every two years. It is an incredibly worthy programme, although sadly, the amount of people who agree to take part could be much higher.

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A couple of days after my first letter, I received my test "kit" – a cardboard envelope, six cardboard sticks and a prepaid return envelope. Three samples needed, over three separate days.

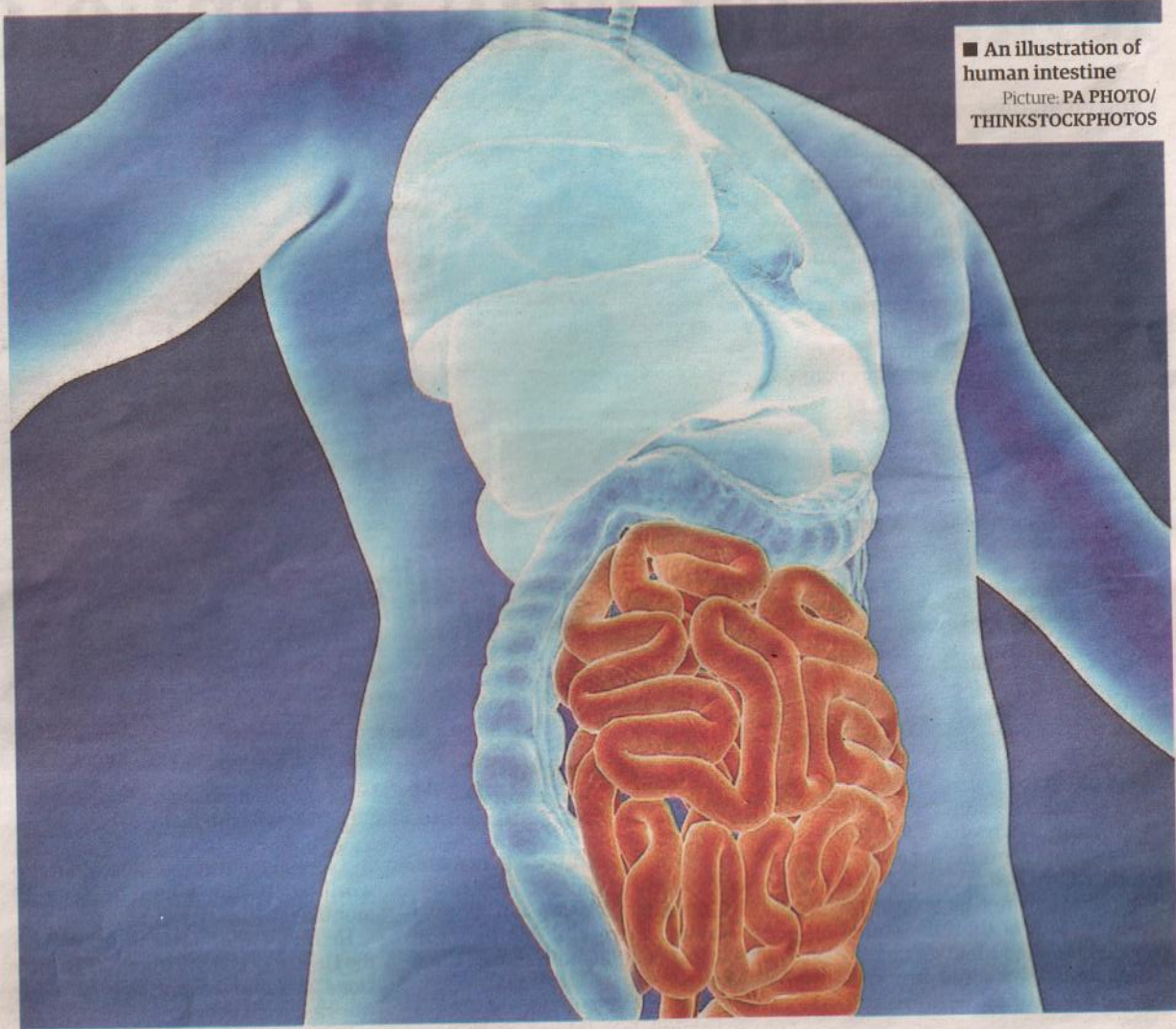
And so it was that I found myself in the toilet, reading my instruction leaflet and work out how to get this delicate and potentially disastrous job done.

I will spare you the grisly details, but suffice to say it didn't all go smoothly at first.

Yes, not a moment that I'd like to relive.

But for days two and three though, I came up with a better system – and discovered a tip which I pass on now to all of you out there between 60 and 74 and facing an upcoming poo test.

At the back of a kitchen cupboard I found a cardboard party plate – complete with Christmas bells and



■ An illustration of human intestine

Picture: PA PHOTO/  
THINKSTOCKPHOTOS

holly berries – trust me, this is a much more stable base on which to make your deposit.

So, all samples duly collected and placed in the cardboard package, I filled the pre-paid envelope and drove down to the Post Office under cover of darkness and slipped it into the mailbox and ran away.

But, I'm happy to tell you that a couple of weeks later, a very nice professor wrote to me and told me

that all samples were normal – no evidence of bowel cancer thank goodness.

Learning from this experience, I'll make sure there are some party plates and plastic gloves available in two years' time when I take part again...for it seems a no-brainer to me. It may be a bit undignified, it may sound embarrassing....but it's done in the privacy of my own toilet and if it helps save my life

then count me in.

And if the poo test letter drops on your doormat, don't dismiss it... grab your party plate and do yourself a favour.

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